## 26 MILE ZOLA, NOVELIST *AND* REFORMER

hostile to the scheme. Fortunately Zola, besides having good friend in M. Aude, the mayor of Aix, obtained in Paris, notably from Thiers and Mignet, whose association with the old Provengal city is well known; and May, 1844, he obtained a royal declaration of public utility of his project, with leave to expropriate landowners, purchase land, and capture water on terms which were arranged. The landowners, however, often set extravagant prices on their property, bitter disputes arose over valuations, and all sorts of authorities, with interests stake, raised one and another claim and difficulty; the Council of Zola's State at last having to re-adjust agreements with municipalities and others, in such wise that a final covenant was only signed in June, 1845. Zola then returned **Paris** with his wife and son, for, apart from all municipal help, considerable amount of money had to be raised for the terprise, and it was not until midsummer, 1846, that the Zola Canal Company was at last constituted.<sup>1</sup> Then the engineer went southward once more. One reads in contemporary newspapers that the great struaale affected his health, that he was no longer so strong formerly, but it is certain that he felt full of confidence. His courageous efforts were about to yield

fruit: the work was begun, the first sod was cut, the first blasting operations were carried out successfully. Zola stood, as it threshold of the promised land. And then, all once, destiny struck him down. One morning, after three months' toil, while he was superintending his men, the "mistral" that scourge of southern France, descended the valley upon where they were working. The icy blast laid clutch <sup>1</sup> Societ6 du Canal Zola: deeds, drawn by Maltre Baudier, Notary in Paris.